

The Many Adventures of Eduardo the Mouse

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Alexandra Sideris

Dr. Paul Ranieri

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Ranieri', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Abstract

This thesis is a story about Eduardo, a mouse who goes on an adventure out into the open world. It is set in the Italian portion of EPCOT in the Walt Disney World Resort. Eduardo lives in the Via Napoli Ristorante, where he gets his meals from leftover pasta and breadcrumbs, and enjoys the comfort of his own home. One day he discovers a pamphlet of Venice, Italy and decides to go outside and explore his own surroundings for the first time, using the pamphlet as inspiration. Even though he experiences some scary moments along the way, Eduardo realizes that being outside of his comfort zone can lead to a fun adventure.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Ranieri for supporting me throughout this project and for encouraging me with my illustrations and ideas. I respect and appreciate his eye and appreciation for art as well as his thoughts about my thesis.

Author's Statement

This thesis is a compilation of my love for art and writing. I came to Ball State pursuing a Journalism degree, but found that I loved description and colorful writing too much to limit it to factual information. This led me to change my major to a general English degree. Before I came to college, I had many pieces of artwork featured in various shows and contests, but ever since I came to Ball State I haven't had much time for creatively expressing myself the way I would like. This is why I decided to do this creative story for my thesis: it combines both of my passions into one collection. My inspiration for the setting of this story came from my Walt Disney World College Program internship I did my sophomore year, another passion of mine. I have been to Disney World several times and will be working for their company after graduation. I chose a mouse for the protagonist to help relate to a younger audience and to help better express my fable. I enjoyed doing this project and think it was a good challenge. It made me think outside of a simple research paper or short story, and it took enough time to make it worthwhile.

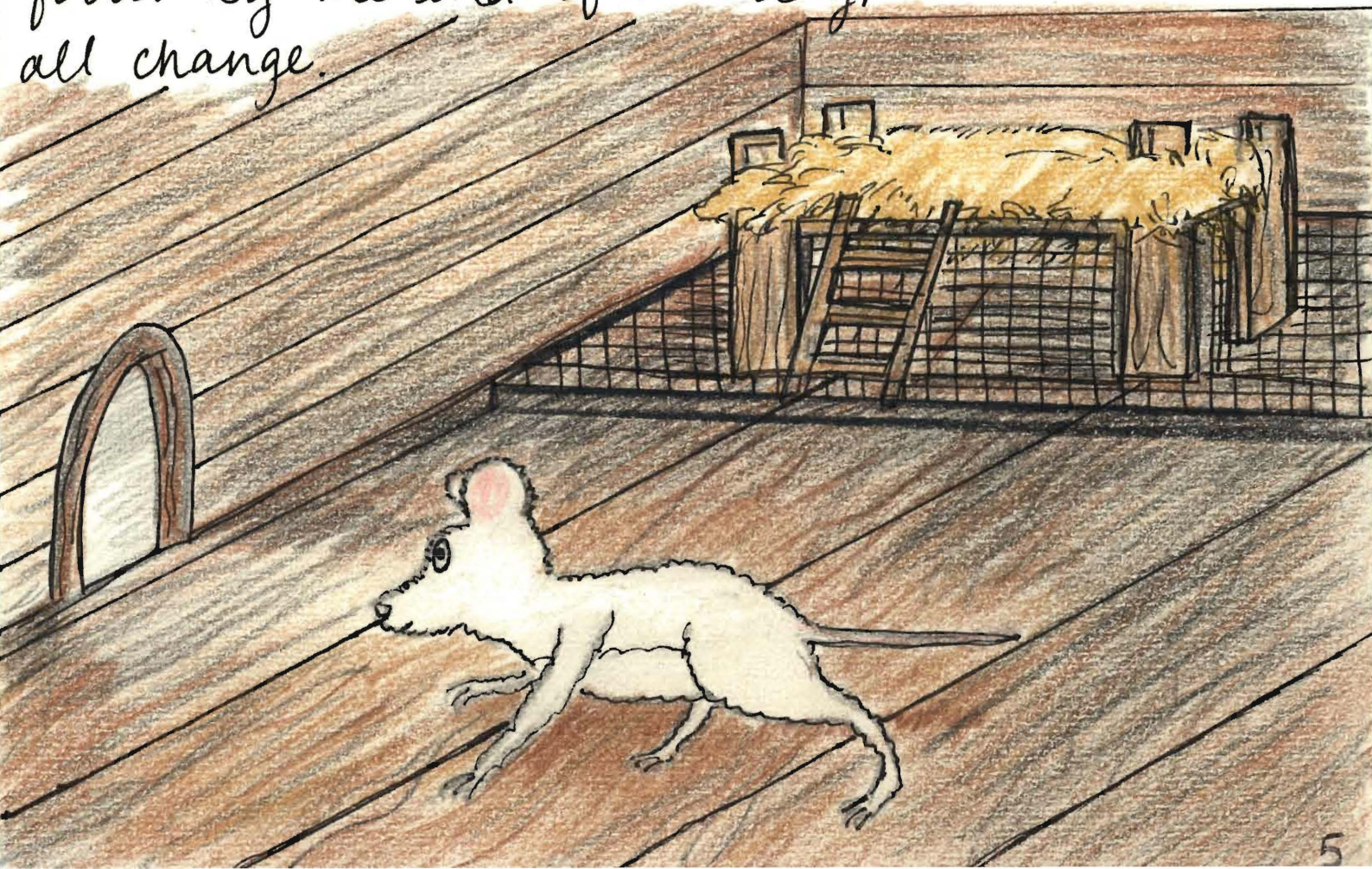
The Many Adventures of EDUARDO the MOUSE

[an extended fable]

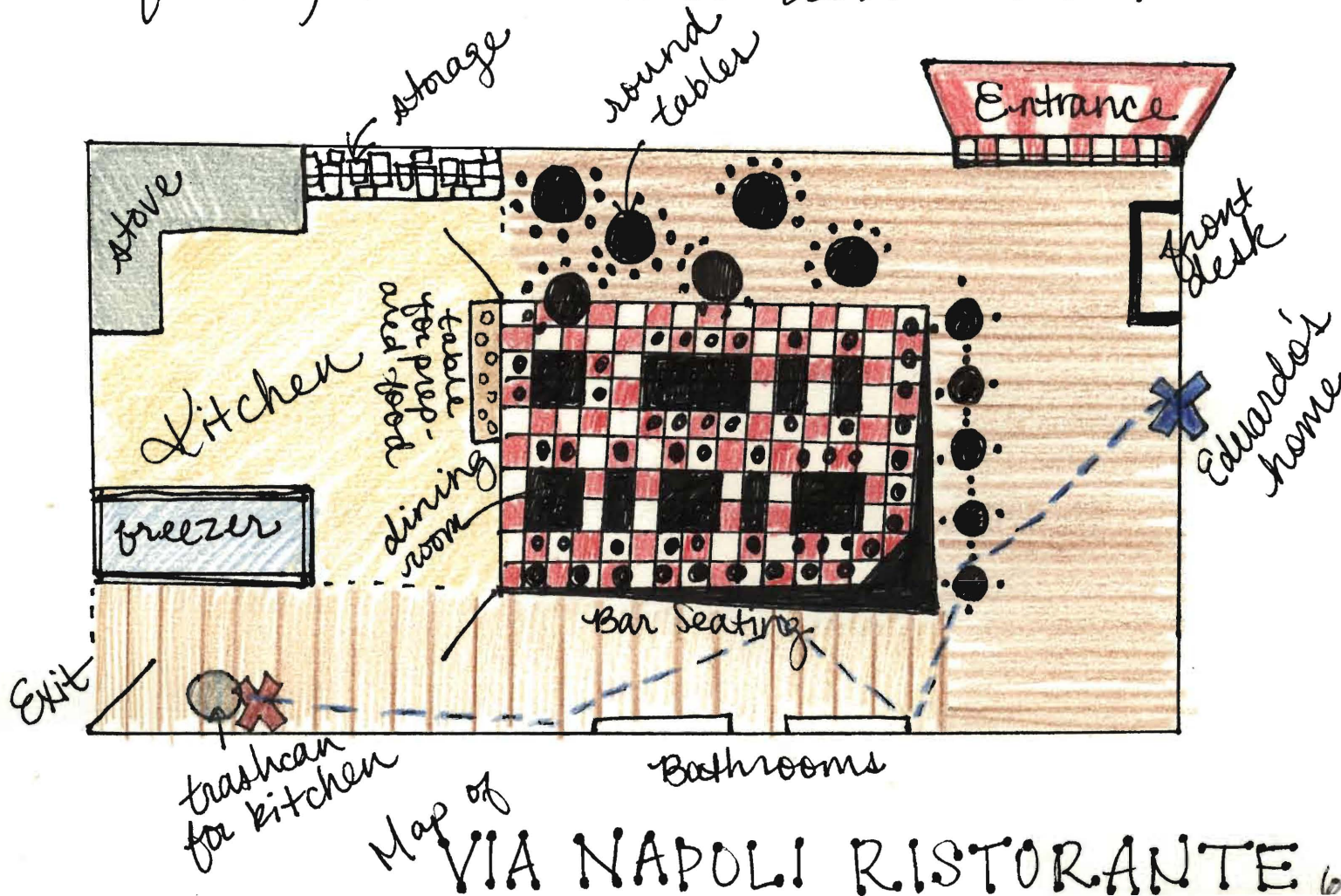
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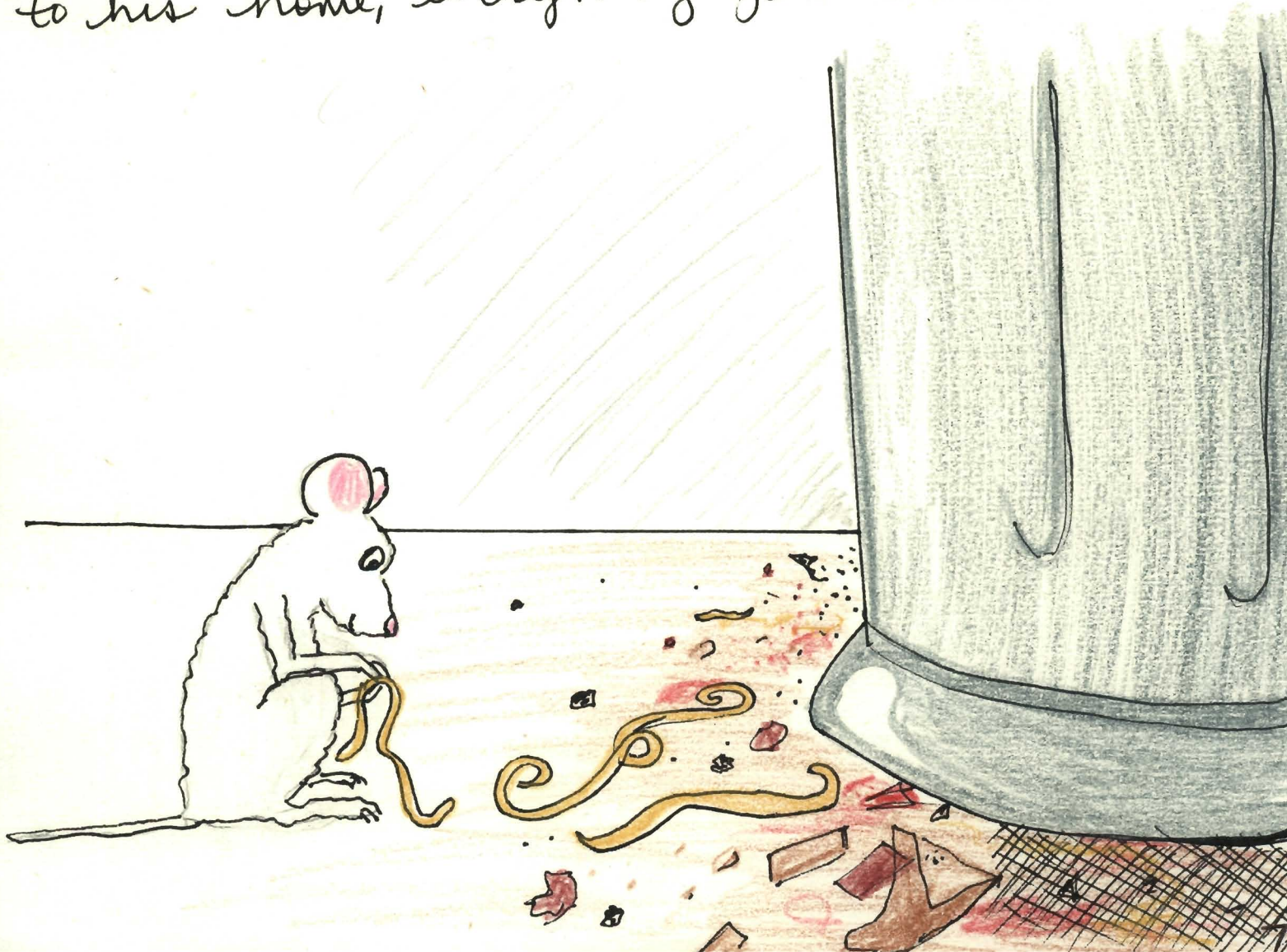
Smells of fresh bread waft through the small opening to Eduardo's home, greeting him as he woke from his slumber. Taking a deep breath, he stretches and descends from his straw bed, eager to find some food. Big ears pricked, he makes his way to the hole in the wall that leads to the large kitchen of Via Napoli Ristorante. Eduardo had lived in the small opening between the floor of this restaurant for years, but he never left the comfort of the large, looming residence that always provided him with shelter and food. By the end of the day, that would all change.



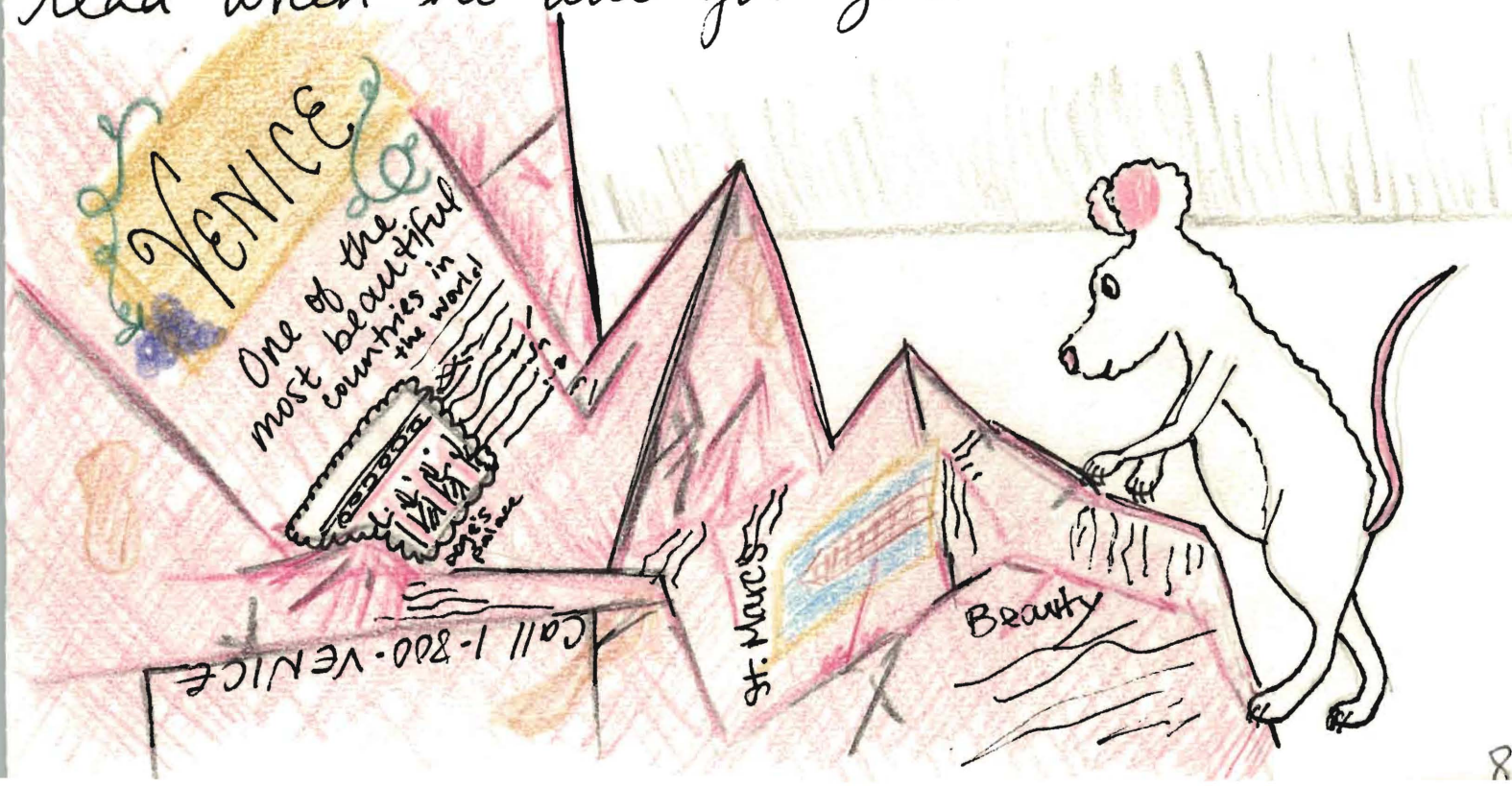
Eduardo's growling stomach reminds him that it is time for breakfast. He inches up to the opening in the wall and peers out as large dress shoes and clicking high heels pass back and forth. Waiting for the precise moment, Eduardo thinks about the plan in his head: "Get to the food without anyone noticing, stop, eat, and hurry back." Scavenging for food is not always easy, but the restaurant Eduardo lives in always seems to have an abundance of it. Eduardo waits until the coast is clear, darts left and right as his claws click across the hardwood floor, and finally reaches his destination.



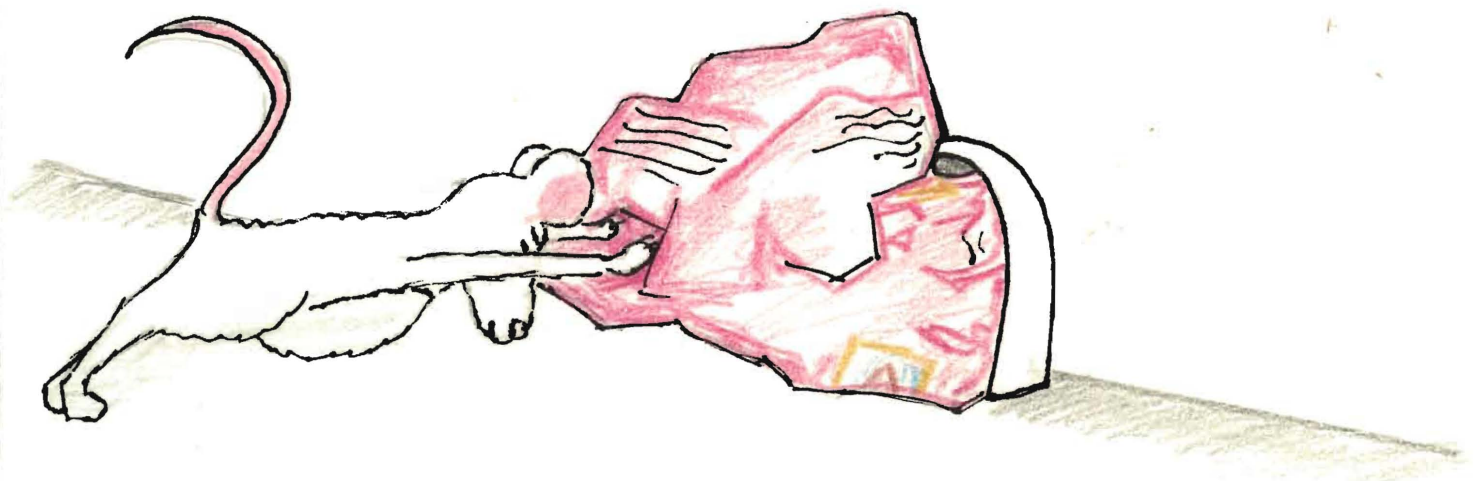
multiple smells hit Eduardo's nose as he hides in between the trashcan and the wall, hoping not to be seen. He is sure that the big people will not appreciate seeing him eat their food without paying for it. Crumbs of bread and old spaghetti noodles are strewn around the trashcan, ripe for the picking. Eduardo had learned to adapt to the Italian diet, finding it is much more satisfying than cheese alone. He darts in and out of his hiding place, grabbing as much food as he can get his paws on. Just as he is about to dart back to his home, everything goes black.



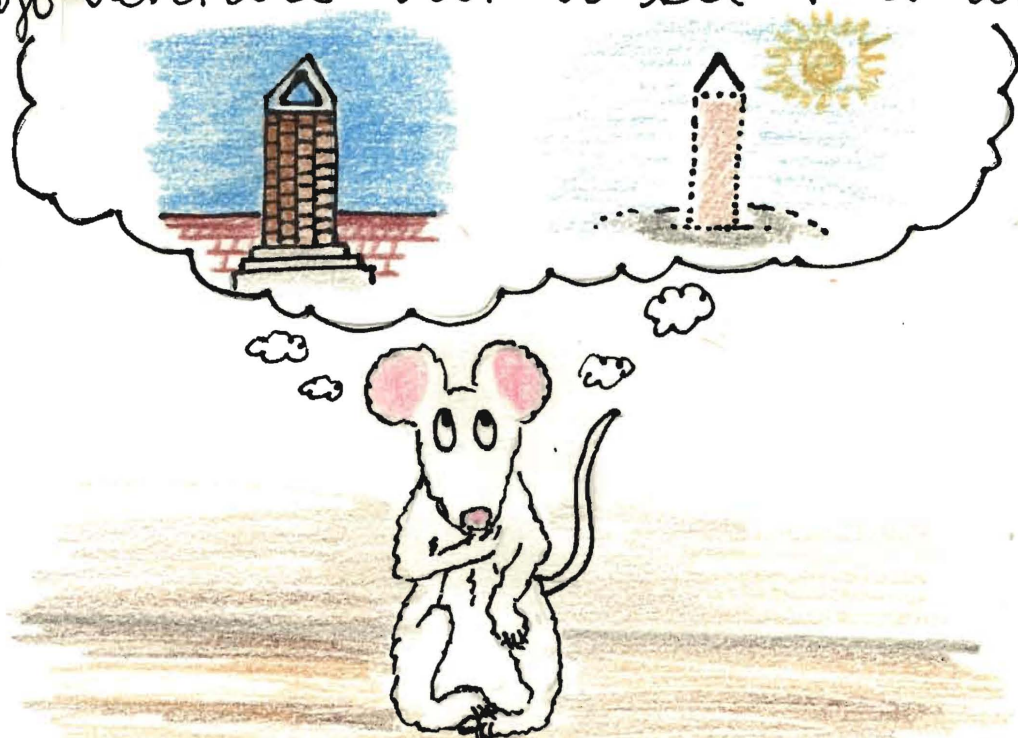
Frightened, Eduardo flails frantically around him until he sees a small light peeking through the blackness. Blindly, he runs toward it and bursts through the blackness to find that he is still near the trashcan. Heart pounding, he turns around to find a flattened pamphlet marked "Venice" in huge letters laying flat on the ground. The paper is four times the size of Eduardo and he concludes that apparently some large person must've meant to throw it into the large trashcan, but missed. Calming himself down, Eduardo walks over to the large paper, stands up on hind legs, and begins scanning the giant images and words, thankful that his mother taught him to read when he was younger.



From what Eduardo can see of the pamphlet, Venice seems like a very nice place to him. He lays the pamphlet out to get a better look. As he studies the entire pamphlet, he sees beautiful photographs of St. Marc's Square, with its majestic tower overlooking the plaza. Gondolas and water stretch across the gleaming canal, and the fountain of Neptune sports a blue stream of water. The Doge's Palace takes up a portion of the pamphlet, too, along with a number to call to make plans for a trip. Intrigued, Eduardo continues looking it over until the lights dim and the restaurant grows quiet. He decides to take the pamphlet home, and after several grunts and tugs, he finally squeezes the pamphlet inside. After storing it under a loose floorboard, Eduardo eats heartily and goes to sleep.



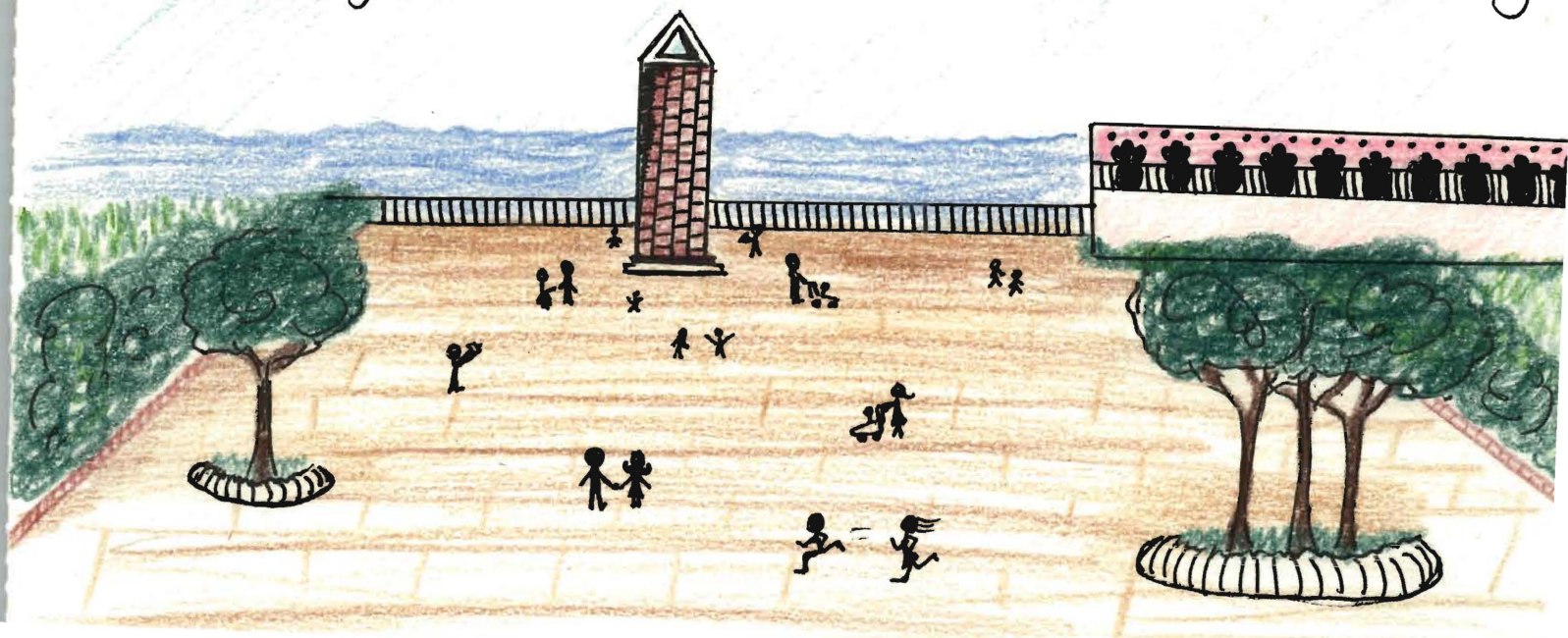
Eduardo wakes up with a start, his heart thumps as he hops out of bed and digs the pamphlet out of its hiding spot. He stretches it out as far as it will go in his small home, corners and sides pressing up against the walls. He looks at the photograph of St. Marc's Tower, a great beacon surpassing all of the buildings around it. Eduardo gasps as he remembers his mother telling him of a large tower outside of the restaurant, and his mind begins to race. As he eats some of his breakfast left over from yesterday's gathering, he tinkers and thinks about the tower in the pamphlet and the one in his mind. Adventure and comfort were both pulling at him, and with a final sigh, he decides he will go venture out to see this ancient tower.



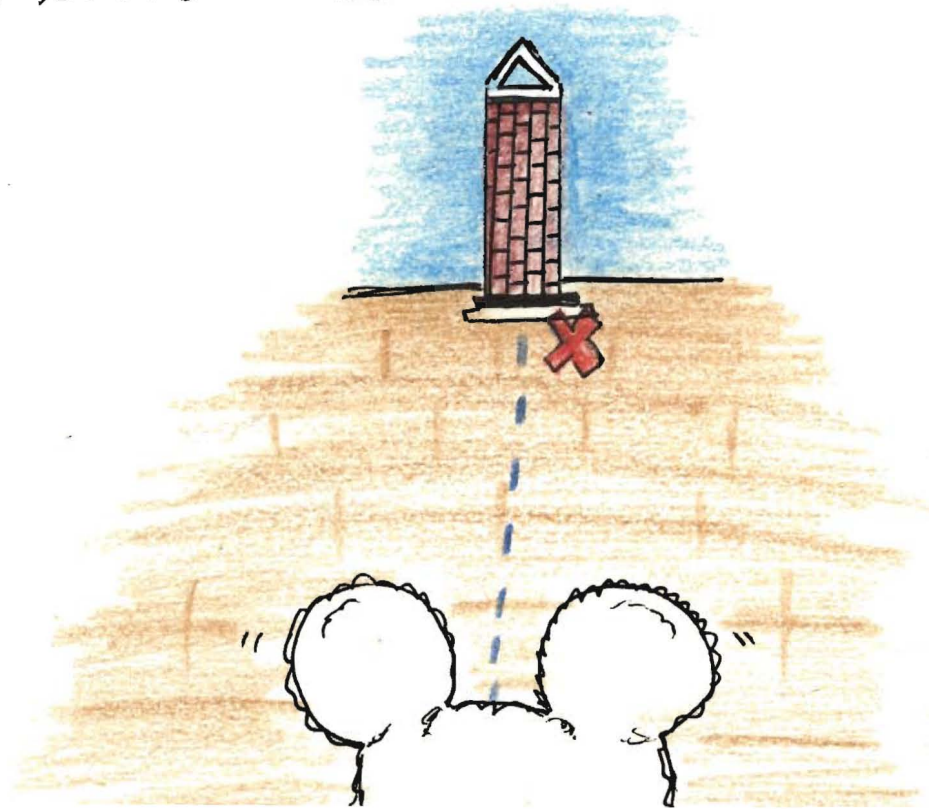
Eduardo studies the pamphlet for hours, waiting again until the moment when his presence in the restaurant will not be noticed. He wants to be sure that if he happens to get lost, he will be able to use landmarks to find his way back. He makes a small sack out of a ripped piece of clothing and puts some extra food into it. Finally, after a few deep breaths and some lunch, Eduardo ventures out into the restaurant, being very careful to stay close to the wall.



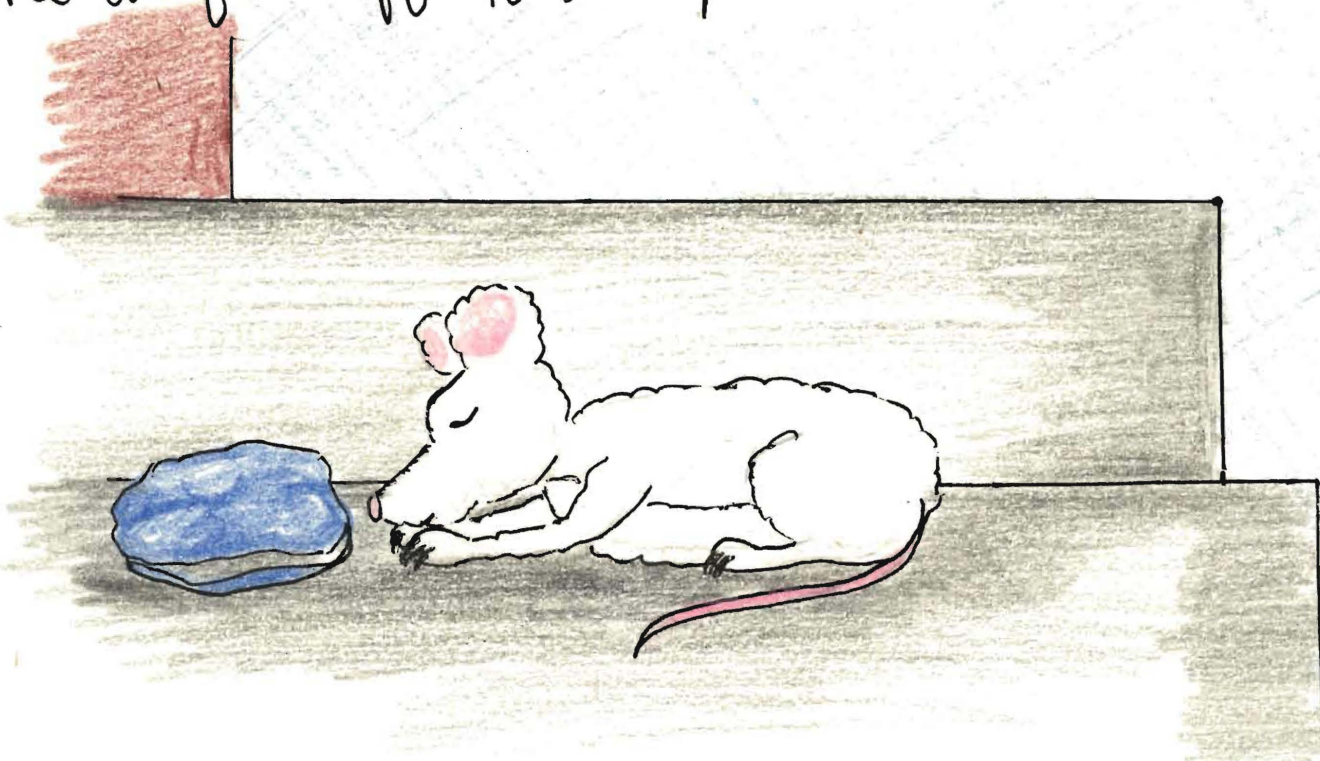
The lights keep shining brighter and brighter as Eduardo nears the entrance to the outside world. He has heard rumors of Florida being hot, but he can't decide if it's the humidity or nervousness that is making him sweat. A cold, air-conditioned breeze blends with a mix of hot, stagnant air as Eduardo sprints between the crack of the restaurant's door just before it closes behind a customer. The red bricks feel hot on his feet as he struggles to breathe in the hot, dense air. Pausing to catch his breath, he admires the busyness and grandeur of the outside world. People and strollers are everywhere, with the tall tower marking the center of the plaza. New smells and sounds greet him as he lifts his nose to the smell of fresh water. He sees a less detailed version of the Doge's palace to his right, and his heart drums excitedly.



Eduardo pauses to observe his surroundings for a while, enjoying the scenery and the everyday life of the people outside the restaurant. One large child is screaming in a stroller, while another sprints for the opposite side of the plaza as a woman shouts after him. The hustle and bustle of the plaza makes Eduardo feel a little overwhelmed. Chest heaving, he nervously devises a plan to sprint over to the tower. It seems like a thousand miles away. Suddenly, Eduardo realizes how hungry he is. Choosing food as his motivation, he decides that when he gets to the tower, he can rest and eat lunch. After taking a deep breath, Eduardo sprints faster than he ever thought possible through a labyrinth of feet, stroller wheels, and discarded food.



At the foot of the tower, Eduardo feels lightheaded and unbearably hot. After slowly walking on tired legs around to a shaded side of the tower, he makes sure he is out of the reach of children before plopping down on the cool brick. He pulls a few Breadcrumbs out of his pack and nibbles on them, realizing then that he is parched. Eduardo glances around and finds a small stream of water dripping down the side of the tower only a few inches away from him. After drinking and eating to his heart's content, he rolls over onto his side and falls asleep. "It's not so bad out here," he thinks as he drifts off to sleep.



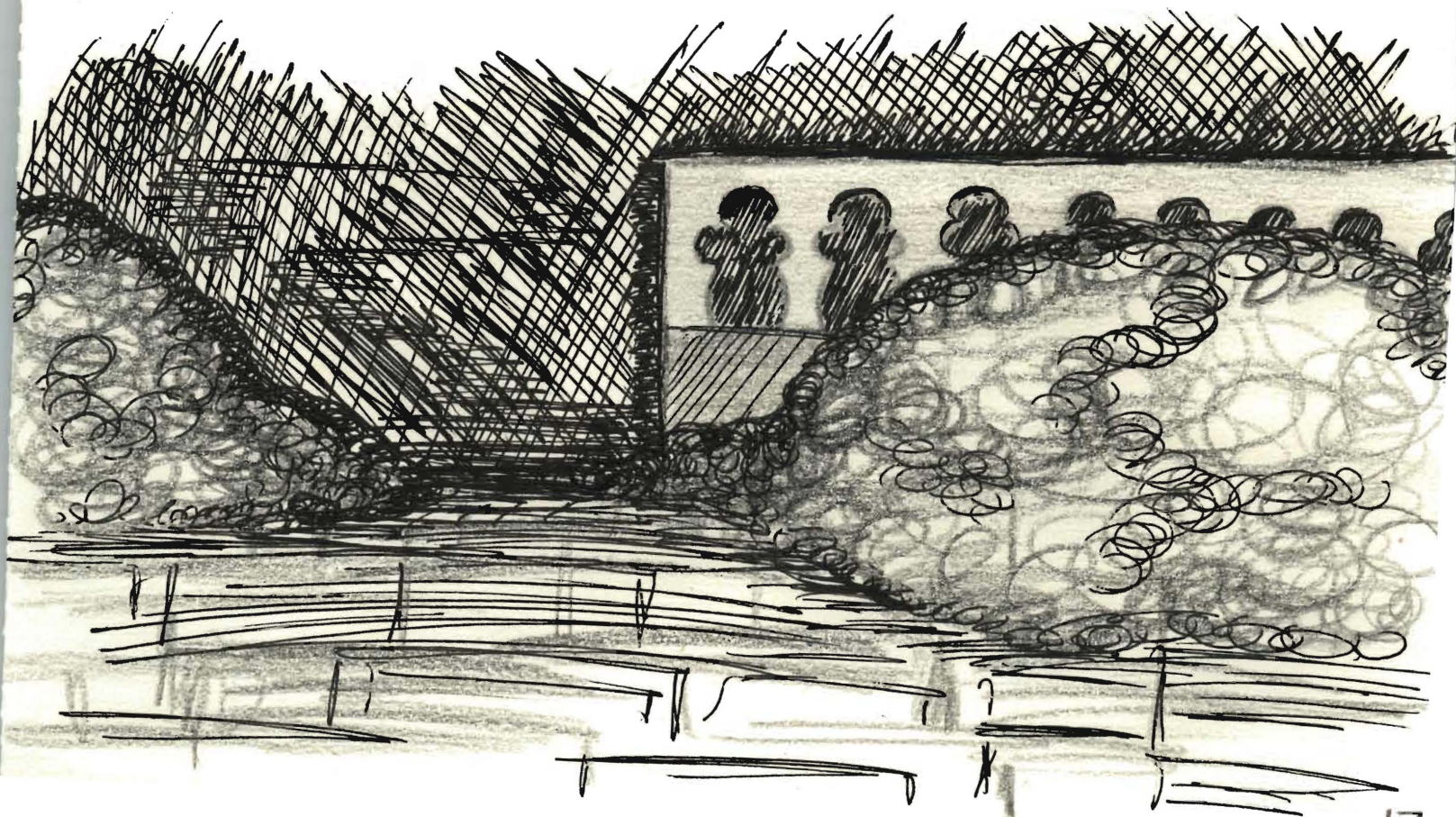
When Eduardo wakes up, it is dark and the plaza is deserted. The bricks are cool beneath his body as he sits up and glances around. Water drains into the shape of a large puddle from sprinklers, and Eduardo thinks about how thirsty he is. Nervously, Eduardo gets to his feet and walks over to the puddle. He glances around, alert to the nocturnal sounds of frogs and insects around him. Eduardo has no sense of the time of day, and decides he should wait for the sun to come up to return home. Once he returns to the tower from the puddle, he takes a slat and waits.



As Eduardo waits for dawn to come, he nibbles on some breadcrumbs from his pack. Beginning to grow restless, Eduardo continues to survey his surroundings. Just then, he sees a glimmer from the flowerbed. Squinting, he tries to make out the colorful shape that appears to be floating. Eduardo gasps. It is coming toward him! He backs up instinctively, pressing himself against the tower's steps. As the shimmering blob approaches closer, Eduardo lets out a sigh of relief — it is a butterfly! Smiling, he watches the beautiful creature lazily float over him and off into the distance, happy to have the chance to see it up close instead of through the window.



The more Eduardo waits, the more restless he feels. It seems like ages since Eduardo last saw the butterfly. The night begins to cool down and he starts to feel alone and frightened, his senses picking up every strange sound or moving shadow. The foreign, artificial lighting only picks out certain parts of the plaza, and does not help Eduardo gauge his surroundings. Squinting across the plaza, Eduardo makes out the rounded windows of the Doze's Palace and starts to go in that direction. He remembers that inside the pamphlet, there are many images of lavish furnishings and warmth. Desperate to find shelter, Eduardo runs the rest of the way over, his heart pumping wildly in his chest.



The large columns come closer and closer with every step Eduardo takes. He imagines plush carpets, warm fireplaces, and large people relaxing in a roomful of books, pushing him to run faster. He rushes past the columns and begins to feel across the external wall for an opening. Up and down he paces in one direction, cold plaster greeting his paws. He comes to the end of the wall to find that it stops suddenly. Frantically, Eduardo runs back around to the other side, only to discover the same problem. What Eduardo believed to be an extravagant palace is nothing but a deceiving facade. As the realization dawns on him that he won't be able to get inside, his eyes widen and his breathing increases, fearing he will be trapped outside forever. He takes off and sprints as fast as he can.



A slight calming feeling began coursing through Eduardo's racing mind. "I'm almost home, I'm almost home," he thinks. The darkness starts to dissipate slightly as he continues to run, feeling like he has never ran so far in his entire life. He passes the tower and keeps running, not slowing down as he repeats the mantra over and over in his mind. He sees a small glow overtake the sky. Sunlight! He smiles and is grateful for some light to help him find his way home. After about ten more minutes of running, he skids to a stop. In front of him is not his beloved restaurant, but a black wrought-iron fence to block people from falling into the water. Gondolas tied to poles rest in the water like ducks, their black hues contrasting the sparkling water around them. Realizing he ran the wrong way, Eduardo begins to cry. Just then, the sun blossoms up over the horizon. It is the most beautiful thing Eduardo has ever seen.



The Many Adventures of Eduardo the Mouse

Reflection

The concept behind this story emerged from my passion for drawing, my love of writing, my knowledge of Walt Disney World, and what I have learned about myself while in college. I feel like for most of my college career as an English major I have been writing reading responses and research papers, only having the chance to take two creative writing courses during the four years I have been at Ball State—and I wanted to do something new and innovative. This is one of the reasons I chose to do this piece in a handwritten format. I wanted a chance to be creative and to represent the effort that goes into short stories that people may take for granted. Writing a short story that conveys a message with illustrations takes a lot of time and dedication and because of that I felt my thesis was appropriately challenging for me. Even though my original idea was to do a comparative piece on fantasy versus reality within the story, it emerged into the form of a fable—and I'm happy it did!

I decided to do this in the form of a fable because I wanted to give my creative piece meaning instead of pure entertainment. A fable features a subdued moral and gives the reader more to work with than merely what they see illustrated on the page. For my piece, I would like to say that the moral of the story is to venture out of your comfort zone even though it might be scary at times. I feel like that is a summation of what I have learned coming to college. In high school, I was comfortable in my small town, but now that I am graduating college I have participated in a Disney College Program in Orlando, Florida, raised over \$4,000 for a non-profit organization that helps fight AIDS in Africa, and now will be leaving in a month and a half to work full-time in a sales position at the Disney Vacation Club in Orlando, Florida. I never thought I would have the courage to do most of these things, and although there have been difficult times in college, I stepped out of my comfort zone and found something beautiful.

The following italicized excerpts are from an omniscient narrator's perspective, illustrating what Eduardo was thinking during his adventure. I put this in here because it helped me write the story from a more personal level, and these parts make it more relatable for someone who is reading it. I think these pieces accomplish the correct amount of emotion, and I wanted to include it here for reference:

A Fable Explored: Omniscient Narrator

Eduardo feels comfortable in his own home, knowing the way around to get food and survive. He is a timid mouse who has never ventured outside his home in the Italian restaurant and is a creature of habit. Eduardo has never had the nerve to discover what lies beyond his home, let alone see that there is more to life than just being comfortable and well-fed. At this point, he saw no need for adventure because he was content in his lifestyle.

Eduardo's literacy skills are finally being utilized when Eduardo encounters the pamphlet. While he reads menus and signs here and there, he has had no need to explore further because his environment is very controlled. The fallen pamphlet has thrown a variable into Eduardo's life (a fixed equation) and he begins to wonder what was outside his home, and if these landmarks that he is reading about in the pamphlet exist outside of his Italian restaurant home.

Leaving the restaurant is the first phase of Eduardo's adaptation to his new environment, not stopping to think twice about going home yet. Eduardo has proven that he can find his way around slightly within this foreign lifestyle, even though the hot air is difficult to get used to. With his goal in mind, he is overtaken by new sights and smells, and yearns for more.

Eduardo has found a new life in his exciting environment when he sprints over to the tower. He seems to stifle most of his nervousness at this point, in a sort of honeymoon phase. Although he is exhausted and slightly overwhelmed by all of the people scurrying like mice around him, he is enthralled by the new sights around him.

The first stint in Eduardo's journey starts when he wakes up near the tower. He begins to feel homesick, frightened, and exhausted. Just as we deal with problems in our own lives when we see an obstacle in our paths, Eduardo feels the same. At this point, Eduardo has yet to deal with his personal feelings and is overcome with tiredness. He can choose to move forward with his mission at this point, or he can turn back. We always have our own decisions to make, and feel that we are sometimes trapped between two inevitable pieces to the puzzle.

Eduardo's perception has failed him. Although he used his pamphlet to help him find his way until this point, he is shocked to find that this lavish palace does not exist in EPCOT. This is where the disconnect between EPCOT and Venice occurs, and while Eduardo calls EPCOT his home, he does not realize that the Venice depicted in the pamphlet and the Italian section of EPCOT are not one in the same. His response to this is to flee and return home, afraid of being let down by the outside world again. What we perceive is our own reality, and when something occurs that is not in our pattern of habit, we tend to escape to something that is real for us, too.

From this point, Eduardo cannot use his sense of direction or artistic landmarks to make his way home in the darkness. Rather than fleeing to the nearest building, he rationally concludes that the best thing would be to wait until it would be safer to return home. Sometimes when we are confronted with something we can't understand, we grasp onto the nearest stability in our lives and cling to it, whether or not we will benefit from it in the future.

Eduardo was afraid and alone, but the sunrise reminded him that without taking risks he never would have witnessed such a beautiful sight. Even though he went the wrong direction toward his home, he was blessed with a comforting sight. We tend to plan out our lives as well and when we feel lost and distressed, it is difficult to have faith in

the unseen, but perhaps we should wait on our own sunrise, and know that it's always darkest before the morning.

The illustrations were appropriately challenging. While I have a knack for drawing cats, Eduardo was not easy for me to illustrate at first. I had to do many sketches beforehand to make sure I could draw Eduardo appropriately. I chose to handwrite instead of type it because I thought it would show more effort, honestly. As an English major I could write a short story in a matter of two hours and turn it in, but I felt that the typeface would be more distracting than the illustrations. I wanted it all to have the same feel and penmanship, and realized as I kept drawing that perfection is something that will never be reached in this type of format. In my college career I have been taught that having an absolutely perfect copy of a document is something to be desired, but the fact is that nothing we produce will be absolutely perfect. As a detail-oriented person, this was hard for me to accept at first and I found myself being extremely critical of myself. As I looked at the piece more as a whole, I realized that I enjoyed the entirety of it better, and that small kinks are something that will be forgotten if the entire piece is beautiful, kind of like Eduardo's story.

This thesis challenged me to take a step back and read between the lines and just have fun. I think that I learned more about what I am capable of from an artist's perspective and it made me really think about what was important. This entire piece took about five months to produce, and I am satisfied with the final product. Although the moral of the story may not be obvious, I know it helped me figure out my own story and see myself reflected in this thesis. I hope that others will enjoy Eduardo's story, and that it makes them think about how they view themselves as well.